

CATALOGUE
OF AN EXHIBITION OF
LITHOGRAPHS AND
ETCHINGS OF
THE PANAMA CANAL
BY
JOSEPH PENNELL



WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY
JOSEPH PENNELL
AND LETTERS FROM
COLONEL GEORGE W. GOETHALS
CHIEF ENGINEER OF THE PANAMA CANAL
AND JOSEPH BUCKLIN BISHOP
SECRETARY OF THE ISTHMIAN CANAL COMMISSION



FREDERICK KEPPEL & CO.
4 EAST 39TH STREET
NEW YORK

SEPTEMBER 19 to OCTOBER 12, 1912

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NOTE

Complete sets of Mr. Pennell's Lithographs of The Panama Canal have been purchased by the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts for their permanent collection and by the United States Government for the Library of Congress and also for the Isthmian Canal Commission.

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Pennell

*Copy of a letter from Colonel George W. Goethals,
Chief Engineer of the Panama Canal, to Mr.
Joseph Pennell.*

Colon, August 7, 1912.

Dear Mr. Pennell:

I cannot express in words the pleasure that these pictures give me, as they illustrate so clearly, forcibly and vividly the work, and portray actual conditions with a force which I did not think could be developed in a picture.

Yours very sincerely,

GEORGE W. GOETHALS.

*Copy of a letter from Mr. Joseph Bucklin Bishop,
Secretary of the Isthmian Canal Commission,
to Mr. Joseph Pennell.*

Dear Mr. Pennell:

I have your letter telling me that the Government at Washington has bought a complete set of your Panama lithographs. This is glorious news and is a worthy recognition of a great artist and a great work, for I am sure that these prints will rank amongst the best things you have ever done. You saw the work as no one else has had the eyes and the brains to see it, save, of course, those of us who are actually engaged in it. I am delighted that this is the outcome.

Yours very sincerely,

JOSEPH BUCKLIN BISHOP.

I WENT to the Panama Canal because I believed the greatest engineering work the world has ever seen would give me the greatest artistic inspiration of my life. I went because I believed that at the Canal I should see the Wonder of Work, the Picturesqueness of Labour, realized on the grandest scale. I believed that if but little of all I had heard of the huge locks, the great dam, the deep cut, were true, on the Isthmus of Panama I should find the most marvelous subjects of all time, so risked it—a risk of fifteen thousand miles, for possible picturesqueness.

In January of this year the chance came, and after two weeks of voyaging, one morning the Isthmus was ahead, a range of mountains, their lower slopes and valleys modeled and hidden in what I first thought was snow, but soon found were clouds and mist. Beyond were higher peaks, strange yet familiar, the whole a perfect Japanese print. And as the ship came nearer the hills and mountains became silhouetted with Japanese trees, and the American towns became Japanese, too. That which I had never believed existed save on Hiroshigi's blocks was before me, yet I was thousands of miles from Japan, and all this was the work of God and American engineers. When I landed I found the houses of Colon full of character, and the church had a tower, a pyramid, decorated with a mosaic of oyster shells, glittering, shining like silver through the mist. The people, too, had character, and most of the children, as in Spain, were unencumbered with clothes.

The afternoon I arrived I spent in the American town of Colon. Every house is Japanese in feeling, screened in black wire outlined with white wooden frames, to keep out the flies and mosquitos that are no longer there. I believe the original design was French, and some of the houses were built by the French. The houses are shaded by a wood of palms; through this wandered well-made roads. There were no smells, no flies—nothing that one finds in all other tropical and semitropical countries.

Next day I started for the City of Panama,—though it was not until I landed that I learned where the officials and offices were. Until I found them and presented my letters—and even then—I did not know if I should be allowed to draw; I thought, as usual, I had better work till I was stopped. No one had said a word at Colon, so I got off the train at Gatun, marveling at the town climbing up the hillside—a town I should have drawn had I not been going to draw the locks. The locks are only a hundred yards or so away from the station, and over to them I went with my sketching-traps, determined to do as much as I could before I was stopped—as I fully expected I should be. From a rough wooden bridge—bearing the legend that all used it at their own risk—spanning the locks I looked down into a yawning gulf. Away below were tiny men and tiny trains. To the right the gulf extended to a lake; to the left rose great gates. On them pygmies were working; huge buckets and cranes rushed and creaked across the chasm. As I looked a whistle blew. Every one instantly dropped their tools, and long lines of little figures marched away or climbed wooden stairs and iron ladders to the top; and from the depths a long chain rose and clinging to the end of it, grouped as Cellini would have loved to group them, were a dozen men swinging up to the surface—the most decorative, yet real, motive in the Wonder of Work I had ever seen. No one could imagine it,—and I had only a minute to see it.

Across the bridge was a telephone-box, and beyond and below this the great arches of the approach to the lock, nearly finished, rising sheer more than a hundred feet, soon to be hidden beneath the lake. This was a subject, and I tackled it. The only way to do these things is to do them when and where you see them, for they all depend on the effect and the impression they produce at the moment. Often as I was at Gatun, I only saw the men coming up on the chain once again, and I never saw the approaches again as they were that day. I have been told I see these things through a temperament. I hope I do. I

have no desire to pose as an artless artist or a pitiful photographer.

In the distance was the already filling lake, dotted with new-made islands, the highlands still emerging from this new flood, crowned with palms and strange trees. Bridges like those of Hiroshigi joined island to island and the mainland. American steamers were anchored, native canoes moved rapidly about, great birds hovered over the face of the waters. The long line of the almost submerged but finished French Canal stretched to the distance. Before I left the Isthmus it was swallowed up forever. Against the horizon, purely but faintly outlined, were the blue-gray flat mountains crowned with the strange-shaped trees. It was perfect, the apotheosis of the Wonder of Work; and I had come at just the time to see it. But a few months, and these subjects will be buried under water and under dirt, never to be seen again.

The Dam is too big and too vague to be picturesque. At least I never saw a subject in it. But its very bigness makes it seem a part of the hills that stretch to the mountains, and this vagueness impresses one.

In the evening, no one having stopped, or objected to, my drawing and prying about, as they would anywhere else, I took the train to Panama—one of the last that ran over the old line of railroad, now most of it under the waters of the growing lake. From the car window I saw for the first time the tropical jungle, which I had never believed in—never believed that it could not be penetrated save with an ax or a machete; but it is so—and the richness of it, the riot of it, the tangled, somber mystery of it, is incredible and endless. The train moved along in its own time-taking fashion, covering in two hours and a half the forty miles across the continent, so slowly that I could make notes of motives, though I saw little of the Canal. But impressions got for one's self in this way are worth endless pointing out by other people. Still, here and there were glimpses. Once or twice we crossed the Canal bed. Here and there huge

cranes loomed against the sky; abandoned locomotives crowned hilltops in lines; here locks towered in the distance; and Japanese villages, filled with Americans, Hindus, Spaniards, and Negroes, were everywhere. Native villages still lingered in swampy clearings, though mostly huts were exchanged for old freight-cars. Finally came Panama, the houses, row above row, all lit up, climbing the side of Ancon Hill.

The next day, donning my khaki and pocketing my railroad pass and some oranges, I started for the lock at Pedro Miguel (pronounced in American, Peter Magil, just as Miraflores is called Millflowers). The train was divided by a baggage-car into two parts, and filled at one end with blacks and at the other with whites. The sun rose as we reached the station at Pedro Miguel, and in the midst of a great crowd of negroes, Greeks, Orientals, and engineers I tramped to the lock, a half-mile off. Here I went to the bottom and looked up between the huge walls outside the gates, spanned with arches and buttresses—one of the most stupendous, most decorative compositions I have ever seen. When I asked the engineer—Mr. Williamson—how he had come to make the splendid springing lines of his arches and buttresses, he said it was only done to save concrete. Yet the result is as fine as the flying buttresses of a cathedral. The floor of the lock was crowded with men, the walls at the top, with the concrete forming crenellations, were crowded; and with the cries of bosses, the shrieks of whistles, and the blasts of explosions, it seemed like a siege. But all was peaceful. Either no one among the thousands had time to bother about me; or if they did occasionally, it was to ask whom I was working for, to offer me a glass of ice-water—and ice-water is precious when there is no breeze at the bottom of a lock—to suggest points of view, or to warn me to clear out as a blast was to be fired. And when they had time, the interest of these men in my work was as great as in their own. A man in huge boots, muddy overalls, and an apology for a hat, his sleeves rolled up to his shoulders,

would prove himself in a minute a distinguished engineer, and the greatest compliment I have ever had was when these men have told me my drawings "would work."

Day after day it was the same. No trouble, no red tape, no questioning as to where I was going, no prying into what I was doing. Trains, motor-cars, launches—all were at my service; government hotels were open to me. The only things to avoid and look out for were blasts, and dirt slides in the Cut, and the trains which rushed about without any reference to any one who might happen to get in front of them. Yet if one got run over—as happened—there were plenty of hospitals, excellent surgeons, and pretty nurses.

I could go on about the Canal endlessly, for I was there just at the right moment and under the right auspices, but the more important matter to some readers may be the way in which the lithographs were made. This was very simple. I had blocks of lithographic transfer-paper made (I used Scotch Transfer-Paper made by Cornillesons of London), and did all the drawings on the spot with Korn's lithographic pencils and chalks. The dampness and heat had little or no effect on them. They were carried from Panama to San Francisco, and thence to Philadelphia. They were seen and handled at times very carelessly—or enthusiastically—by several people, including cowboys and collectors. They were put down upon the stone in the printing-office of Messrs. Ketterlinus, in Philadelphia, by a most excellent printer—Mr. J. Gregor; and every one of them transferred after a journey of six thousand and more miles and a three or four months' delay.

All lithographers thought, first, that they never would transfer; second, that no one in America could do it, or if they could, that I would not be allowed by the Trade-Union to have the work done. I was informed by one person that I must join the Union. I agreed to this. I was then told it would cost me thirty dollars; and finally, when I offered to pay that, they

did n't want me in the Union. This was a pity, as I am sure the Lithographers' Trade-Union, or its walking delegates, would have had the time of their lives. As a matter of fact, the work was excellently and expeditiously done, and I hope it may serve as a record of the building of the Canal,—a record of subjects which even now exist no longer, but which in my lithographs, I hope, may, to the best of my ability, be preserved,—a memory of the greatest work of modern time,—a record of the greatest American achievement of all time.

JOSEPH PENNELL.

NOTE. The foregoing is part of an article by Mr. Pennell which appears in the October number of *The Print Collector's Quarterly*.

CATALOGUE

LITHOGRAPHS

1 Colon.

“The afternoon I arrived I spent in the American town of Colon. Every house is Japanese in feeling, screened in black wire outlined with white wooden frames, to keep out the flies and mosquitos that are no longer there. I believe the original design was French, and some of the houses were built by the French. The houses are shaded by a wood of palms; through this wandered well-made roads. There were no smells, no flies—nothing that one finds in all other tropical and semitropical countries.”

2 The Administration Buildings.

3 French Canal and American Cranes.

4 The Approach to Gatun Lock.

“I got off the train at Gatun, marveling at the town climbing up the hillside—a town I should have drawn had I not been going to draw the locks. The locks are only a hundred yards or so away from the station, and over to them I went with my sketching-traps, determined to do as much as I could before I was stopped—as I fully expected I should be. From a rough wooden bridge—bearing the legend that all used it at their own risk—spanning the locks I looked down into a yawning gulf. Away below were tiny men and tiny trains. To the right the gulf extended to a lake; to the left rose great gates. On them pygmies were working; huge buckets and cranes rushed and creaked across the chasm.

“Across the bridge was a telephone-box, and beyond and below this the great arches of the approach to the lock, nearly finished, rising sheer more than a hundred feet, soon to be hidden beneath the lake. This was a subject, and I tackled it. The only way to do these things is to do them when and where you see them, for they all depend on the effect and the impression they produce at the moment.”

5 The Guard Gates, Gatun Lock.

6 Dinner Time.

7 The End of Day.

“As I looked a whistle blew. Every one instantly dropped their tools, and long lines of little figures marched away or climbed wooden stairs and iron ladders to the top; and from the depths a long chain rose and clinging to the end of it, grouped as Cellini would have loved to group them, were a dozen men swinging up to the surface—the most decorative, yet real, motive in the Wonder of Work I had ever seen. No one could imagine it,—and I had only a minute to see it. Often as I was at Gatun, I only saw the men coming up on the chain once again, and I never saw the approaches again as they were that day.”

8 The Jungle.

“In the evening, no one having stopped, or objected to, my drawing and prying about, as they would anywhere else, I took the train to Panama—one of the last that ran over the old line of railroad, now most of it under the waters of the growing lake. From the car window I saw for the first time the tropical jungle, which I had never believed in—never believed that it could not be penetrated save with an ax or a machete; but it is so—and the richness of it, the riot of it, the tangled, somber mystery of it, is incredible and endless.”

9 A Native Village.

10 Steam Shovel in the Cut at Bas Obispo.

11 Looking up the Cut from Bas Obispo.

12 The Cut toward Culebra.

13 The Cut from Culebra.

“The train moved along in its own time-taking fashion, covering in two hours and a half the forty miles across the continent, so slowly that I could make notes of motives, though I saw little of the Canal. But impressions got for one’s self in this way are worth endless pointing out by other people. Here and there were glimpses. Once or twice we crossed the Canal bed. Here and there huge cranes loomed against the sky; abandoned locomotives crowned hilltops in lines. Native villages still lingered in swampy clearings, though mostly huts were exchanged for old freight-cars.”

14 The Cut at Paraiso.

15 Between the Gates, Pedro Miguel Lock.

“The next day, donning my khaki and pocketing my railroad pass and some oranges, I started for the lock at Pedro Miguel (pronounced in American Peter Magil, just as Miraflores is called Millflowers). The sun rose as we reached the station at Pedro Miguel, and in the midst of a great crowd of negroes, Greeks, Orientals, and engineers I tramped to the lock, a half-mile off. Here I went to the bottom and looked up between the huge walls outside the gates, spanned with arches and buttresses—one of the most stupendous, most decorative compositions I have ever seen. When I asked the engineer—Mr. Williamson—how he had come to make the splendid springing lines of his arches and buttresses, he said it was only done to save concrete. Yet the result is as fine as the flying buttresses of a cathedral. The floor of the lock was crowded with men, the walls at the top, with the concrete forming crenellations, were crowded; and with the cries of bosses, the shrieks of whistles, and the blasts of explosions, it seemed like a siege. But all was peaceful.”

16 The Bottom of Pedro Miguel Lock.

17 The Walls of Pedro Miguel Lock.

18 Early Morning, Miraflores.

19 Cranes at Miraflores.

20 Building Miraflores Lock.

- 21 In the Cut, looking toward Panama.
- 22 The City of Panama.
- 23 Entrance to the Canal from the Pacific.

ETCHINGS

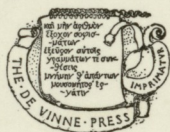
24 The D  b  cle of De Lesseps.

“I followed my instinct, and it took me to the great swamp, a mile or so outside the town at Mount Hope, where so much of De Lesseps’s work lies buried. Here are engines, dredges, lock-gates, huge bulks of iron, great wheels, and nameless, shapeless masses half under water, half covered with vines; or else in long rows are ranged on the shore the locomotives and dredges, ready, when cleaned up, to do the work they were built to do a quarter of a century and more ago.”

25 Gatun Lock.

26 Culebra Cut.

27 “Bishop’s Walk,” Panama.



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